NUTRITION

Nutrition: Tips for Improving Your Health

Good nutrition is one of the keys to good health. This means making sure you regularly eat foods that have a lot of vitamins and minerals in them, as well as foods that are not high in fat. It is important to eat foods high in fiber and at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

What changes can I make now in my diet?

Almost everyone can benefit from cutting back on fat. If you currently eat a lot of fat, try just one or two of these changes:

- Eat 3 to 4 servings of low-fat dairy products every day. You can use reduced-fat cheeses and nonfat yogurt. For example, if you make pizza at home, try using part-skim mozzarella cheese on top.

- If you eat meat, eat it baked, grilled and broiled rather than fried. Take the skin off before eating chicken. Eat fish at least once a week.

- Cut back on extra fat, such as butter or margarine on bread, sour cream on baked potatoes, and salad dressings.

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables with your meals and as snacks.

- When eating away from home, watch out for "hidden" fats (such as that in salad dressing and desserts) and larger portion sizes.

- Read the nutrition labels on foods before you buy them. If you need help reading the labels, ask your doctor or your nutritionist.

- Drink no- or low-calorie beverages, such as water, unsweetened tea and diet soda.

Balanced nutrition and regular exercise are good for your health even if your weight never changes. So try to set goals you have a good chance of reaching, such as making one of the small changes listed above or walking one more day per week.